



Director of
Central
Intelligence

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**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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**Warsaw Pact Forces
Opposite NATO**

National Intelligence Estimate

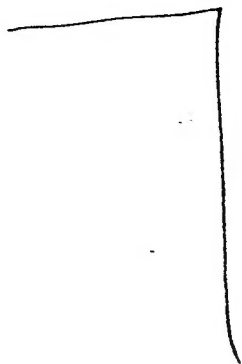
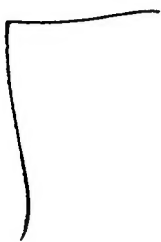
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WARSAW PACT FORCES
OPPOSITE NATO

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PREFACE

National Intelligence Estimate 11-14-81 is concerned with the general purpose forces of the Warsaw Pact nations that are available for use against NATO.¹ It assesses the present and future capabilities of these forces for conventional, chemical, and theater nuclear warfare. It generally covers a period of five years in its future considerations but extends to 10 years where evidence allows. Because the focus of this document is on Europe, it does not deal with Soviet forces along the China-USSR border, the Soviet Pacific Fleet, or other forces in the Soviet Far East.

¹ For the purposes of this Estimate, these include all the ground and tactical air forces located in the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) nations and those in the USSR's Baltic, Belorussian, Carpathian, Leningrad, Odessa, Kiev, North Caucasus, and Transcaucasus Military Districts. Forces in the Moscow, Volga, and Ural Military Districts of the USSR also could be used against NATO. In addition, the general purpose naval forces in the three western Soviet fleets, including the Mediterranean Squadron, and the NSWP navies are included. Finally, the Estimate also deals with those strategic forces of the Soviet Union that could be used against European targets in a peripheral attack role.

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KEY JUDGMENTS

We believe that during the period of this Estimate (1981-90) the Soviet Union's commitment to improving its military forces will not flag and that, despite changes in the political leadership and problems in the economy, its investment in these forces will continue at the current annual 4-percent growth rate for at least the next four to five years.

Moreover, with respect to the general purpose forces that the USSR and its Warsaw Pact allies deploy opposite NATO, we estimate that:

- The Soviet goal is clear-cut force superiority—conventional, nuclear, and chemical—with which to fight and win a short war; one in which NATO would be overwhelmed by the scale and violence of the Pact's offensive before the Allies could bring their strength to bear.
- Because of the lessened vulnerability of their theater nuclear forces and their improved tactical nuclear capability, the Soviets show a continuing interest in a more flexible nuclear doctrine, but they remain profoundly skeptical that nuclear conflict can be controlled. The bulk of the evidence indicates that any substantial use of nuclear weapons by NATO would be met by a massive Pact nuclear strike.
- During the 1980s, the Pact's drive to achieve further advances in general purpose forces will have more to do with making qualitative improvements than increases in numerical strength.
- The qualitative advances will be made primarily by the introduction of more sophisticated equipment and by reorganization of combat elements and improvement of command and control—particularly in the Soviet Ground and Air Forces.

If a NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict occurred, we would expect the Soviets within the European theater to:

- Concentrate their initial efforts in Central Europe, attacking with ground forces organized into five fronts (80 to 90 divisions).
- Accompany the ground attack with a massive air assault intended to decimate NATO's theater nuclear capability and to gain air superiority.

- Attempt to seize northern Norway and the Turkish Straits and to attack NATO forces in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean.
- Protect their ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) and to attempt to destroy NATO SSBNs.

We reckon further that the Soviet drive to improve Pact theater force capabilities opposite NATO during this decade will be influenced by:

- Greater uncertainty about the reliability of their East European partners, a perennial issue made more pressing by recent developments in Poland.
- The reluctance of the East Europeans to increase military spending, thus contributing to the continuing qualitative disparity between their equipment and that of the Soviet forces.
- The difficulty of overcoming certain technological deficiencies, such as antisubmarine warfare and defending against very low altitude attacks by aircraft and cruise missiles.
- Manpower problems including a declining birth rate, a growing proportion of non-Slavs in the Soviet armed forces, and the challenge of training conscripts to operate increasingly complex weapon systems.

Despite these problems, we believe that the threat to the West will grow because the Soviets will make progress in gaining the more sophisticated weaponry and more flexible approaches to command and control that heretofore the NATO nations have regarded as their special province and the equalizing factor for the Pact's numerical advantages in men and equipment.

THE ESTIMATE

Factors Underlying Soviet General Purpose Forces Programs

1. The Soviets' longstanding commitment to large-scale investment in general purpose forces is based on a number of factors rooted deeply in their world outlook and historical experience. These include the Marxist-Leninist tenet that the risk of war is inherent in the continuing struggle with the capitalist powers; a traditional paranoia about external threats; the bitter memory of World War II that still affects the thinking of their most senior policymakers; and the knowledge that their control of Eastern Europe, indeed of the many nationalities that make up the USSR, demands an armed forces establishment of inhibiting proportions. The importance of the latter consideration has been underscored for the Soviets by recent events in Poland. Moscow also is driven to acquire ever more potent general purpose forces by virtue of its continuing hostility toward China and its expanding interests and initiatives in the Third World.

2. It is the possibility of a military confrontation with NATO, however, that more than any other factor explains why the Soviets invest so heavily in general purpose forces. [

] The Soviet leaders presume that someday they may have to fight a full-scale war with NATO. Moreover, they seem convinced that the outcome of such a conflict can be predetermined in favor of the side that has best prepared to wage it at any level. The improvement of general purpose forces is necessarily time consuming and therefore essentially unaffected by even the more substantial fluctuations in East-West relations. Nevertheless, the apparent decline of detente as a dominant factor in those relations must reinforce both the Soviets' historic conviction that they are threatened by the West and their commitment to being ready to prevail in any conflict. Moreover, it is evident that the USSR perceives a utility in massive general purpose—as well as strategic—forces in situations short of war. The mere existence of such power provides substantial leverage in the conduct of Soviet foreign policy and not least of all in the NATO-Warsaw Pact context. For example, the growing perception among West European

electorates that attempting to match Soviet military might has become futile breeds divisions among Allied governments that work to Moscow's advantage.

3. The cost of this commitment to general purpose forces is immense in both absolute and relative terms. Since Brezhnev came to power in the mid-1960s, annual defense spending has all but doubled in real terms and now amounts to more than one-eighth of the gross national product. Sustaining this level of investment through the 1980s is likely to be increasingly difficult. Soviet economic growth is stalling while the price of military research and technological innovation is skyrocketing. Those advantages the USSR has won over the West in some aspects of general purpose forces are likely to be ever more expensive to sustain in the face of aroused US defense interests. These problems notwithstanding, we expect the annual 4-percent growth rate in Soviet defense spending to continue for at least the next four to five years. Their political and economic system is slow to change and their decisionmaking structure has always given priority to military programs. Their leadership seems sure to change in the 1980s, but the dedication to the concepts underlying their commitment to general purpose forces is unlikely to be affected by the change in personalities. As the Soviet leadership is forced to make hard choices about its priorities over the next 10 years, it seems certain that they will sacrifice economic development and social welfare before making any significant reduction in the growth of military power.

4. Based on this conviction, we estimate that the size, disposition, and capabilities of Soviet general purpose forces in the 1980s will be shaped to:

- Assure the USSR's continued domination of the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries and the rule of the Communist parties in those states.
- Provide numerical preponderance and, whenever possible, qualitative superiority in the manpower and weaponry arrayed against NATO.
- Maintain sufficient additional manpower and weaponry to deter and, if necessary, defeat China, Japan, and US forces in the Far East.
- Develop sufficient naval forces to defend the USSR and promote Soviet interests at sea.

- Eliminate armed resistance to the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan; to maintain sufficient additional forces to influence events in the Middle East and Persian Gulf area.
- Support Moscow's political initiatives and military activities in other areas of the world.

Soviet Doctrine for Theater Warfare in Europe

5. In keeping with the world outlook and historical experience described above, the most basic Soviet military doctrine is the defense of the homeland. This does not mean; however, that Moscow is resigned to conducting defensive warfare on terms and territory chosen by its adversaries. On the contrary, the Soviets are convinced that their surest defense lies in the capacity for decisive offensive action; they are equally determined that that action will not take place on their territory. It is for these reasons that they have developed such massive general purpose forces designed principally for offensive roles and have attached such importance to the buffer states they control in Eastern Europe. In a war with NATO, they intend to carry the fight to the West and make the Allies bear the brunt of combat on their territory.

6. Soviet doctrine requires that the general purpose forces of the USSR be prepared to fight and win at any level—conventional, chemical, nuclear, or any combination thereof. Their goal is a short war—one in which NATO would be overwhelmed by the scale and violence of the Pact's offensive before the Allies in general—and the United States in particular—could bring their strength to bear. The Soviets would prefer to achieve this goal without resorting to nuclear weapons or, at least, without escalating to a strategic nuclear exchange. To achieve these aims, Soviet doctrine calls for clear-cut force superiority at the outset of a conflict and, to the extent possible, using deception and surprise as force multipliers. They intend to seize and maintain the offensive initiative and to implement it with conventional weaponry for as long as possible.

7. Soviet doctrine emphasizes offense as the decisive form of combat. A defensive posture for Pact forces is deemed permissible only on a temporary basis and valid only for creating favorable conditions to transition to an offensive. In conducting offensive operations, the key Soviet concepts are to bring mass to bear at enemy weak points along the main axes of advance and to exploit any openings with highly maneuverable forces capable of ravaging the enemy's flanks and rapidly moving forward into its territory. The key ground forces for im-

plementing these concepts are massed artillery and mechanized armies to create the breakthroughs and tank armies to exploit them. Tactical aviation would play a vital role in effecting both types of operation. As these operations get under way, however, Soviet doctrine calls for a massive air assault, conducted by both tactical and long-range aircraft delivering conventional weapons on a theaterwide basis. The objectives of such a huge assault—which the Soviets refer to as an air operation—would be to establish air superiority over the areas in which Pact ground forces plan to advance and to decimate NATO's capacity to escalate to nuclear warfare by attacking airfields, missile sites, nuclear weapons depots, and command, control, and communications facilities.

8. The goal of this combined air and ground assault in Central Europe, supported by Soviet naval operations in the adjacent maritime areas, is to destroy NATO's committed forces and to occupy West Germany, the Benelux nations, and Denmark in a campaign lasting less than a month. Simultaneous attacks could be expected in northern Norway, on Allied naval forces in the Mediterranean, and against the Turkish Straits, but it seems unlikely that the Pact would undertake more extensive operations until it had achieved its key objectives in Central Europe. Thereafter, Soviet planning apparently encompasses an invasion of France and eventual operations against Italy, Iberia, the United Kingdom, and the rest of Scandinavia. Soviet writings [aspiration to accomplish these campaigns entirely with conventional forces, but nearly always allow for the conflict to turn sooner or later to the use of theater nuclear weapons.

9. With respect to chemical warfare, the Soviets are planning for the contingency that lethal chemical agents would be used in a war between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. They have a continuing, vigorous, and extensive program to equip and train Pact forces for this contingency and have produced a spectrum of modern chemical agents and delivery systems as well as tactics for the large-scale use of such weapons. We do not know the Soviet doctrine with respect to initiating the use of chemical warfare. We do know that the Soviets categorize chemical weapons as "weapons of mass destruction" whose initial use must be authorized at the highest political level. However, the evidence regarding the decision the USSR's leaders would take with respect to the question of first use is very limited and open to differing interpretations. As a result, there are at least two schools of thought on this matter within the US Intelligence Community although all believe there is at least a substantial risk of such use by the Soviets. There is also general

agreement on Soviet doctrine for employment of chemical weapons if their use is authorized. Evidently, the Pact sees applications for chemical weaponry in both offensive and defensive situations and stresses the advantages of surprise, large-scale applications, and joint service operations under centralized control. The preferred targets are airfields, nuclear weapons depots, logistic centers, command and control facilities, and large troop concentrations. Soviet writings indicate that chemical weapons would be used in combination with conventional and even nuclear weapons to heighten their effect. Once their use is authorized by the national leadership, responsibility for employment decisions would pass quickly to the operational commanders in the field.

10. Soviet doctrine with respect to theater nuclear warfare is an evolving matter but, because our evidence on it is more complete than for chemical warfare, the Community's estimate is more unified and confident. As indicated previously, the USSR evidently believes that the initial stages of any NATO-Pact war probably would be fought conventionally and the evidence we hold shows an increasing Soviet disposition to remain in a conventional mode for as long as possible. The same sources indicate, however, a conviction that the success of Pact conventional forces against the West would eventually force the Allies to employ theater nuclear weapons to salvage the situation. Since the 1960s, we have had evidence that if the Pact learned of NATO's intention to employ such weapons, the Soviets would try to preempt. Although preemption continues to be a prominent feature of Soviet theater nuclear force doctrine, its application since the early 1970s has been confined to those situations that indicated that NATO was readying a nuclear strike of massive proportions. We have noted that Soviet foreknowledge of NATO preparations for more limited use of nuclear weapons might not automatically precipitate a decision to employ such weapons on a large scale.

11. This demonstrated interest in a more flexible approach toward nuclear response may be attributable both to greater Soviet confidence in their conventional forces and to a greater interest in keeping the conflict at this level because they remain convinced that any use of nuclear weapons in Europe would probably lead to a massive intercontinental exchange and terrible damage to the USSR. It may also reflect a growing confidence in their tactical nuclear capability and the increased survivability of their theater nuclear missiles, particularly the SS-20. Further, their weapons technology and command and control systems in recent years have been moving toward a capability that would support a policy of a more flexible and selective use of nuclear

arms. Such a policy would be consistent not only with their desire to avoid strategic nuclear war but with an interest in controlling a Western Europe not devastated by theater nuclear weapons. Despite these considerations, the evidence supporting a Soviet interest in flexible nuclear response and controlling escalation remains inconclusive. The bulk of the Soviet nuclear arsenal plus the weight of their doctrinal writings continue to indicate that any substantial use of nuclear weapons by NATO would be met—before or after the West acted—with a large-scale attack involving high-yield weapons.

12. NATO's prospective deployment of more advanced theater nuclear forces is seen by the Soviets as further complicating the chances for controlling escalation. The Soviets think that the West's modernization program increases the risk of nuclear strikes on the USSR if a NATO-Pact war goes beyond the conventional level. They also believe that the new NATO missiles will present new uncertainties for them in assessing the size and objectives of a nuclear attack from Western Europe and therefore in knowing the level at which they should respond.

Trends in Pact Forces and Capabilities for Theater War in Europe

13. For more than two decades the USSR has been engaged in a major buildup of its military forces and those of its Warsaw Pact allies opposite NATO. During the Khrushchev era, the emphasis was on acquiring offensive missiles and strategic defense forces at the expense of a large standing army and conventional air and naval forces. Since Brezhnev came to power in 1964, however, there has been an across-the-board expansion and modernization of all Soviet forces. The new leadership reversed the reductions in ground and theater air forces and approved development programs for new ground force weapons, tactical aircraft, and naval combatants suitable for operations in both nuclear and conventional war. Although much of this buildup in theater forces has been devoted to strengthening the USSR's position vis-a-vis China, Soviet, and East European forces opposite NATO also have improved dramatically. They have emerged from this decade and a half of development with larger, more modern weapon inventories, a more balanced structure, and greater capabilities to prosecute nuclear, chemical, and conventional operations.

14. Of the forces opposite NATO, the Pact's theater nuclear contingent has experienced the greatest growth: more than a doubling in the number of aircraft, rockets, missiles, and artillery available for

nuclear weapons delivery. There also has been substantial growth in ground force manpower and weapons inventories as the size of divisions and number of nondivisional combat and support elements has grown. The size of Pact tactical air forces opposite NATO has grown only slightly, but the reequipment program that began in earnest in the early 1970s has resulted in substantial improvements in their capabilities for counterair operations, nuclear strike missions, and conventional ground attack. The Soviet Navy also has grown—from what in the early 1960s was essentially a coastal defense force with only limited open-ocean capabilities—into a major branch of the military with heavily armed surface ships, high-speed nuclear powered submarines, and improved land- and sea-based aircraft.

15. Over the next decade the Pact's seemingly relentless effort to improve its general purpose forces opposite NATO almost certainly will continue. The thrust of this effort, however, will have more to do with growth in quality than quantity. Although enlargements of some components of the Pact's military establishment continue to be noted, the record of the past few years and the prospect for the 1980s is one of stability in the overall size of the forces but substantial improvement in their capabilities. In this process, the Soviets clearly are in the lead and their East European cohorts are trailing at various distances. This growth in capabilities is attributable in large measure to the introduction of more technically advanced and hard-hitting weapons systems. On a less obvious level, however, it is due to efforts to improve the ways in which these forces are organized and would be controlled once committed to battle. Much of the most important intelligence gained about Pact forces recently has to do with command, control, and communications developments and about moves to reorganize the ground and air forces. We expect these trends to persist throughout this decade.

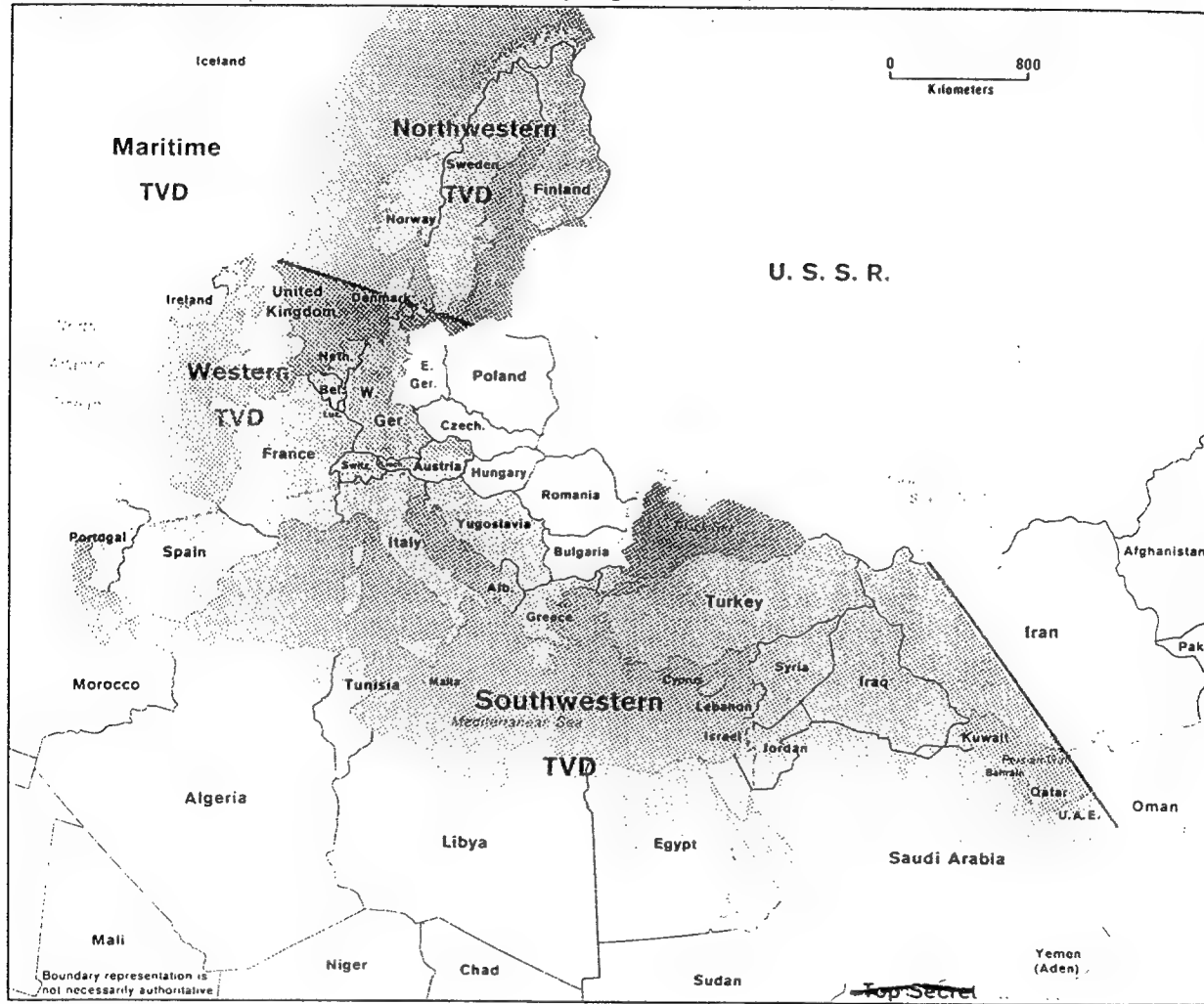
16. Command and control capabilities are increasingly crucial to success on the modern battlefield, given the speed, complexity, and broad ranging effects of current weapons when employed on a theater-wide scale. As in NATO, the Pact's command and control problem is exacerbated by language differences, variations in weapons characteristics, and the multiplicity of roles to be played by the member states. Such difficulties must be overcome if the Soviets are to manage the multinational, joint-service operations of great complexity that are required by their doctrine. Their approach to these problems has organizational, procedural, and technological aspects.

17. From an organizational standpoint, the putative apex of the command and control system is the existing Warsaw Pact Combined Armed Forces Headquarters in Moscow. In a war, however, we expect this nominally multinational entity to give way to the Soviet Supreme High Command (*Verkhovnoye Glavnokomandovaniye*—VGK). The Soviet General Staff would function as the executive agent of the VGK and direct the Pact's operations against NATO through three regional commands, designated as the Western, Southwestern, and Northwestern Theaters of Military Operations (*teatr voyennykh deystviy*—TVDs). There also would be at least one TVD dealing with naval operations in the Atlantic. (See figure 1.) The concept of multinational, joint-service command and control extends from the TVD level down to the largest Pact operational force, which is known as the "front." Fronts initially would be formed by drawing on the leadership, staff elements, and combat forces in the Pact's existing military districts located throughout Eastern Europe and the western USSR. Recently we have noted significant organizational changes in the military districts and some streamlining of their chains of command which seem aimed at facilitating their wartime transition into fronts. Although the size and organization of fronts would vary according to their mission, a typical front would be responsible for the battle management of three to five ground armies, each including three to five tank or motorized rifle divisions. It would also control air forces including several hundred aircraft and, if operating in a maritime sector, might control those naval elements chiefly devoted to supporting front operations.

18. The procedural and technological steps the Pact has taken in recent years to enhance the efficiency of its command and control apparatus include the predesignation and exercise of staff elements to serve in TVD and front headquarters; the improvement of communications support elements for armies, divisions, and fleets; and the assignment by the Soviet General Staff of specific missions for a war with NATO to all Pact countries which, in turn, have developed detailed operational plans for their accomplishment. Standardization in command and control procedures has been substantially achieved by Pact adoption of Soviet practice and the increasing use of the same communications equipment, computer programs, and information support systems. Numerous fixed and mobile command and communications facilities have been established and key elements of this system have been hardened.

19. Together these measures have given the Pact a command and control system characterized by the following strengths: standardization

Figure 1
Possible Warsaw Pact Theaters of Military Operations (TVDs)



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through Soviet dominance of doctrine, procedures, and equipment; vertical and horizontal flexibility in communicating within the full command structure; good communications security; sufficient equipment to ensure redundancy; and the speed with which the command and control system can be activated—currently three to five days. The system is not without its weaknesses, however, and these include operator proficiency; the difficulty some Pact commands experience in working with the Russian language; and vulnerability to physical attack. During the period of this Estimate, we foresee the Soviets concentrating on two programs to improve their command and control capabilities: further centralization of the Pact command structure and establishment of a unified communications system. Work on the latter program is under way but the system is not likely to be fully operational until 1990.

Ground Forces

20. The ground forces of the Warsaw Pact have grown substantially in size and capability since Brezhnev came to power. Their combined strength opposite NATO stands at about 1.9 million of whom just over a million are Soviet. About half of these Soviet troops are stationed in Eastern Europe and the remainder in the western military districts of the USSR. In wartime, these forces would be organized into fronts and armies with a full range of combat, combat support, and service support formations. Within this structure, tank and motorized rifle divisions are the basic tactical units. Currently, the Pact maintains 163 active divisions at varying levels of strength arrayed against NATO. In a war, 13 additional divisions could be drawn from the active forces in the western USSR and 27 reserve divisions—16 Soviet and 11 NSWP—could be mobilized. Over the next five years we expect to see continued modest growth in the number of personnel assigned to various elements of the Pact's ground forces. We believe, however, that the overall size of the force structure as measured in active divisions will remain relatively stable. The key changes will be inside this structure as the Pact strives for more combat effectiveness by reorganizing its major fighting formations and equipping them with more weapons of greater lethality.

21. Signs that the Soviets were testing new organizations for their tank and motorized rifle divisions were evident in experimental units as early as 1977. The decision to implement division restructuring on a force-wide basis probably was made in mid-to-late 1979. In essence, the changes are intended to provide a more balanced infantry/armor/artillery structure with greater firepower and tactical flexibility for both

types of divisions. The implementation of this reorganization has been uneven, but by mid-1981 at least some of the changes had been noted in nearly 70 Soviet divisions in the USSR, Eastern Europe, Afghanistan, and Mongolia. The emphasis has been on strengthening the Soviet forces opposite NATO and when the program is complete, probably in 1985, we estimate 23,000 personnel and 1,900 major items of combat equipment will have been added to the Soviet Groups of Forces in East European countries. Moscow can be expected to press for a comparable reorganizational effort from its Pact allies, but it is unlikely that most NSWP countries will be able to comply.

22. Equipment modernization for the Pact's ground forces has shown great strides in recent years but remains an ongoing problem. This situation is due, in part, to the large size of the forces to be reequipped; it may also be due to the ever-rising cost of more advanced weaponry. As a general rule, the best equipment goes first to the Soviet Groups of Forces in Eastern Europe. The fact that their NSWP counterparts lag considerably in the acquisition of new equipment adds substantially to the Pact's standardization problems.

23. Because Soviet doctrine commits the Pact to offensive warfare, the tank remains the centerpiece of their modernization effort. Aware of the improved technology and growing numbers of Western antitank weapons, the Soviets have continued to make the changes necessary for their tanks to survive and win on the modern battlefield. These changes include an improved 125-mm smoothbore gun, automatic ammunition loaders, laser rangefinders, and advanced armor. The Pact has about 39,000 tanks in units available for use against NATO but only about a quarter are the more modern T-64s and T-72s.

24. A new tank—possibly designated the T-80—is expected to be introduced in the Soviet forces sometime this year and presumably will have greater capabilities. It will be used, along with the T-72 and T-64, to replace the older T-54/55 and T-62 tanks which represent the technology of the 1950s. If Soviet tank plants maintain current production rates, the entire Soviet tank fleet in active units opposite NATO could comprise T-64, T-72, and T-80 models by the end of the decade. By 1990, we expect that at least one division per NSWP army will be equipped with T-72s, but the T-55 will remain the predominant tank in the non-Soviet forces. There are indications that the Soviets are at work already on a follow-on to the T-80, but we have no persuasive information about its technical characteristics.

25. Other major trends in ground forces equipment modernization include increases in the number of artillery pieces and improvements in their range, mobility, tube life, and target acquisition capabilities. In particular, the transition from towed to self-propelled (SP) artillery and the introduction of guns and mortars capable of firing nuclear rounds are considered noteworthy. In addition to nuclear artillery rounds, the Soviets are introducing improved conventional cannon and rocket ammunition with proximity fuses and greater terminal effects. NSWP artillery improvements will lag behind those of the USSR.

26. Another important trend in ground forces equipment modernization is the effort to improve the armored personnel carriers (APCs) which are so vital to the highly mobile warfare required by Pact doctrine. Presently, some Soviet and many NSWP divisions opposite NATO either have older model APCs or remain committed to moving their infantry by truck. Moreover, the reorganization now under way in the ground forces is creating requirements both for more motorized rifle units and for more APCs in existing units. We expect the Pact to attempt to meet these needs on a priority basis over the next decade.

27. In defense of these and other elements of the Pact's ground forces, the Soviets are concentrating on the acquisition of more potent antitank and antiaircraft weapons. The major Soviet antitank development of the 1970s was the development of a new family of four antitank guided missiles (ATGMs). In the 1980s we expect to see further advances in these kinds of weapons, but the emphasis will be on getting the recently developed ATGMs and RPGs more widely distributed. Similarly, although the development of new surface-to-air missile (SAM) and antiaircraft artillery (AAA) systems will continue over the next decade, the key effort will be on trying to get more such weapons into the hands of deployed forces—particularly those of the NSWP armies.

28. In the past, we have estimated that logistic shortcomings would limit the Pact's ability to conduct its planned offensive operations against NATO. For example, the lack of trucks and other means of transportation in Eastern Europe would have required extensive augmentation from the USSR. Since the mid-1970s, however, the Soviet Union has largely overcome this and other apparent logistics deficiencies. The Pact probably regards its current stocks of petroleum, oil, lubricants, and ammunition as sufficient to sustain combat operations in Central Europe for several months. During the period of this Estimate, we expect this buildup of critical supplies and transportation assets to continue.

Air Forces

29. The Pact air forces have not grown substantially in numbers over the past decade. Currently, they have a combined strength opposite NATO of about a half million men, 4,400 fixed-wing aircraft, and 2,800 tactical helicopters. The air forces of the Soviet Union include heavy and medium bombers; tactical aircraft for air defense, ground support, reconnaissance, and electronic warfare; as well as transport aircraft for the movement of assault forces and high-priority cargo. All the NSWP countries have air defense aircraft and ground support components; none have bombers or sufficient transport aircraft to support other than small-scale airlift operations. The air forces of the Warsaw Pact, particularly those of the USSR, are evolving in ways that parallel the developments already recounted about the ground forces. Specifically, although growth in size is noticeable in some elements, growth in capabilities constitutes the most important trend. As in the ground forces, this is being achieved chiefly by new organizational arrangements and the introduction of more advanced weaponry.

30. The reorganization under way in the Soviet air forces appears to be supplanting the traditional division of military aviation into bomber, homeland air defense, and tactical components with a more integrated structure. The intent is to create groups of mixed forces and the means to control them that will be more appropriate to the large and complicated air and air defense operations called for by Soviet doctrine.

31. As explained previously, the Soviets intend to form their fronts from the leadership, staff elements, and combat forces of the Pact's existing military districts. One of the key elements of the current reorganization is the peacetime assignment of homeland interceptors and tactical air units to the control of these districts. The change provides potential front commanders and their theater-level superiors with a better means of supporting ground operations and controlling air defense efforts on a regional basis. It also should facilitate the transfer of air power between fronts or even TVDs as operational requirements dictate. Another important element of the reorganization is occurring below the front level as combined arms and tank army commanders are being given operational control over air assets, particularly fire support helicopter units. Such initiatives are illustrative of a new Soviet willingness to forego traditional organizational arrangements in favor of a new command structure intended to increase the effectiveness of their theater forces opposite NATO.

32. That effectiveness is also being enhanced by the improving quality of the aircraft, weapons, and supporting systems assigned to the Pact air forces. The reequipping of these forces began in earnest in the early 1970s and substantial progress has been made over the past decade. For example, in 1970 some 25 percent of the interceptors were unable to conduct engagements in adverse weather, all attacks had to be performed from the rear, and there was virtually no capability for intercepting low-flying aircraft. Today, over 95 percent of Pact interceptors are able to operate in adverse weather conditions and over 55 percent have a head-on and depressed-angle attack capability. Similarly, in 1970 all Pact fighter-bombers depended on ground stations or dead reckoning to navigate. This limitation forced them to operate at medium altitudes at which they were vulnerable to both NATO interceptors and surface-to-air missiles. Now about 40 percent of these aircraft have onboard avionics that permit them to navigate accurately at low level in poor weather conditions. In 1970, the Pact's strike aircraft were too short in range and too low in bomb payload to operate effectively beyond the Rhine. Today, it has large numbers of tactical aircraft that can attack well into France and the Benelux countries and some that can reach the United Kingdom. Comparable improvements have been made in the quality of Soviet combat helicopters, tactical reconnaissance aircraft, and air munitions. Although the size of the Pact tactical air forces opposite NATO has grown by about 10 percent over the past decade, the more important trend has been the increase in their capabilities.

33. During the period of this Estimate, we expect this emphasis on qualitative improvement to continue. The number of tactical, fixed-wing aircraft may grow slightly over the next decade, but investment will be concentrated on achieving higher performance from Soviet-designed aircraft and air munitions. Furthermore, we expect the Soviets to continue improving their air support systems such as command and control, electronic warfare, and reconnaissance data link systems. No major changes are expected in the number of fixed-wing aircraft in the NSWP countries and qualitative improvements will continue to lag behind the Soviet standard by several years.

34. The most significant improvement in Soviet interceptor capability will result from the introduction of two new aircraft intended to compete with the US F-15 and F-16 fighters. Designated as the SU-27 and MIG-29, they are expected to represent a significant improvement over current models in terms of maneuverability, acceleration, ar-

mament, and avionics. Both are expected to have full lookdown/shoot-down capability and probably will be available in significant numbers in the mid-1980s. An improvement also is expected in ground attack aircraft as the SU-25 "assault aircraft" is introduced. Conceptually, this rugged, subsonic aircraft is not unlike the US A-10 and similarly is intended to provide close-in support for the ground forces. The SU-25 will be complemented by an expansion in the number of MI-24 combat helicopters and further improvements in their avionics and ordnance. By the end of the decade, we expect to see a combat helicopter regiment assigned to every Pact combined arms and tank army.

Naval Forces

35. The Pact's naval assets opposite NATO are primarily Soviet and assigned to three fleets. The Northern Fleet consists entirely of Soviet forces and is responsible for operations in the North Atlantic, especially the Greenland, Norwegian, Barents, and Kara Seas. The Baltic Sea Fleet would consist of Soviet naval units joined by East German and Polish forces to advance Pact objectives in those restricted waters. Similarly, the Romanian and Bulgarian naval forces would join the Soviet Black Sea Fleet to control that inland sea while the latter would also support operations in the Mediterranean. The Soviets routinely operate a squadron of submarines and surface ships in the Mediterranean.

36. We see no evidence of organizational change in the Soviet Navy, at least not on a scale approaching the developments now under way in the ground and air forces. We do perceive, however, a comparable drive for quality in the weapon systems and supporting equipment assigned to the Navy. For many years, the core of the Soviet Union's growing strength as a naval power has been its submarine force. Leaving aside the ballistic missile submarines committed to strategic missions, the Soviets have about 45 cruise missile submarines and some 145 torpedo attack submarines for use against NATO in Europe and adjacent waters. The cruise missile submarine threat is of particular importance because of the ongoing introduction of more sophisticated missiles, all of which are capable of carrying either conventional or nuclear warheads.

37. The surface ships assigned to the three Pact fleets opposite NATO include 15 Soviet principal surface combatants armed with antiship cruise missiles. Seven of these ships have medium- to long-range missile systems armed with conventional or nuclear warheads. To fire these missiles accurately at long ranges would require external

targeting support, but all of these ships are equipped to receive such data from other surface ships, submarines, or aircraft; the two largest ships can receive targeting information from satellites. The eight other principal surface combatants that carry short-range antiship cruise missiles are destroyers. In addition, the Soviets have over a hundred patrol boats equipped with short-range cruise missiles. The Pact's capacity to use surface ships against NATO forces would depend upon their ability to defend themselves, particularly against air attack. We believe that their defenses against modern air weapons, especially very-low-flying missiles, are inadequate but that new defensive missiles, rapid-fire gun systems, and improved target data processing may alleviate this weakness during the period of this Estimate.

38. Soviet naval aircraft have three missions: attacking surface ships, antisubmarine warfare, and reconnaissance/electronic warfare. The bulk of these aircraft are land-based although the role of shipborne aviation is growing with the introduction of the Kiev-class carriers. The Soviets have assigned over 200 bombers to the antiship mission, including about 150 Badgers and some 55 Backfires. The latter are the most significant because their higher speed and maneuverability, combined with the latest air-to-surface missiles and electronic equipment, give them a greater chance of penetrating NATO naval air defenses and attacking targets in the open ocean.

39. In a war against NATO, the Soviets expect to use the submarine, ship, and naval air forces described above in varying combinations to perform a broad range of tasks. The priority of these tasks would depend on the way the conflict unfolded but included among the most important would be:

- Protection and support of Soviet ballistic missile submarines through control of the Kara, Greenland, Barents, and northern Norwegian Seas.
- Destruction of NATO ballistic missile submarines.
- Protection of Pact territory, sea lines of communication and military forces from attack by Western sea-based forces, particularly carrier battle groups.
- Interdiction of NATO sea lines of communication.
- Support of Pact land operations.

40. The Pact's capabilities to perform these tasks would vary considerably. For example, the first two missions would require a substantial capacity for effective antisubmarine warfare, an area in

which the Soviets continue to experience difficulties including the lack of long-range undersea listening systems, the noise generated by their own submarines, ASW sensor deficiencies, and insufficient long-range aircraft for maritime patrol. The outlook for overcoming these deficiencies over the period of this Estimate is poor. These shortcomings severely limit the Soviets' ability to locate and attack NATO ballistic missile submarines in the open ocean. On the other hand, Soviet efforts to protect their own ballistic missile submarines in areas such as the Greenland, Barents, and Kara Seas probably would involve the coordinated use of extensive air, surface, and submarine ASW forces thus reducing the impact of some of these deficiencies. [

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41. To protect Pact territory, and their own sea lines of communication and military forces from Western navies, the Soviets and their allies seem to be better prepared. In the waters near the USSR, NATO surface forces would be subject to detection in open-ocean areas by ELINT and radar reconnaissance satellites, land-based SIGINT operations, and by observation from ships, submarines, and long-range aircraft. Pact surface forces attempting to interdict those of NATO would be aided by land-based aircraft. Moreover, the Soviets could be expected to use their extensive capability for mine warfare on a broad scale to seal off these approaches to Pact territory. In those ocean areas more distant from the USSR, the Soviets would conduct sea-denial operations aimed at neutralizing all NATO naval forces, particularly those capable of striking Pact territory with nuclear weapons. These operations probably would be most intense in the southern Norwegian Sea, its Atlantic approaches, the North Sea, and the eastern half of the Mediterranean. In these areas, range considerations would limit the air cover available for the Soviets' surface combatants, but they could count on strong support from cruise missile and torpedo attack submarines.

42. The USSR will continue to invest heavily in its own submarine force and is likely to achieve qualitative improvements comparable to those made during the past decade. The first of a new class of nuclear-powered cruise missile submarines, the Oscar, was launched in April 1980. Twice as large as earlier Soviet SSGNs, it also has three times as many launchers. Moreover, it is equipped with a new antiship cruise missile with a range of about 500 kilometers. More recently, the Soviets launched a new diesel-powered, attack submarine, the Kilo, but the technical characteristics of this boat are not yet clear. In addition to these programs, we expect construction of follow-ons to the Victor III

nuclear-powered attack submarine and the 40-knot A-class SSN. We believe that all classes to be built during the 1980s will be quieter than current Soviet submarines, but still noisier than the latest classes of Western attack submarines.

43. In surface combatants, the Soviets have several major construction programs under way. Although the total number of such ships is expected to decrease modestly over the next decade, the surface force will grow substantially in firepower and in capability for extended deployments and prolonged combat. For example, the new Kirov-class nuclear-powered, guided-missile cruiser represents a dramatic increase in endurance and diversity of weapons for ships of its type. The fourth Kiev-class aircraft carrier probably will be launched by early 1982 and there is evidence that construction will begin soon on a larger class of carrier capable of operating conventional takeoff and landing aircraft.

Theater Nuclear Forces

44. Warsaw Pact nuclear weapons that could be employed against NATO in Europe are of two distinct types: tactical weapons assigned to the Pact's theater forces and elements of the Soviet strategic forces. Together, they provide a formidable strike capability and one that will continue to improve over the period of this Estimate. The SS-20 missile system and the Backfire bomber, which have prompted NATO to modernize its own theater nuclear forces, are two of the more important additions to an ongoing stream of improvements in this field. The Soviet drive for superiority in weapons of this type is not limited to numbers; their objectives also include greater tactical flexibility, accuracy, and a larger range of warhead yields.

45. The tactical nuclear forces of the USSR have undergone extensive changes over the past decade. Key among these developments have been:

- A one-third increase in the number of surface-to-surface missile launchers.
- A threefold increase in the number of aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons.
- The introduction of nuclear-capable artillery in the western USSR.
- Increases in warhead yields of some older surface-to-surface missiles.

- Major qualitative advances in the newer land-based missile and aircraft delivery systems.
- The capability of the Soviet Navy to deliver a wide variety of nuclear weapon systems from ships, submarines, or naval aircraft.

46. Soviet-controlled tactical nuclear weapons are located in Eastern Europe and some of these weapons are earmarked for NSWP use in a war with NATO. Numerically, the most important nuclear delivery systems in Eastern Europe are the Pact's tactical aircraft. About 1,300 fighters, fighter-bombers, and tactical bombers theoretically would be available for initial operations in Central Europe, but this number would be limited by the fact that only about 750 Pact pilots are trained for nuclear weapons delivery. Since the mid-1970s the role of tactical aviation in Soviet planning for theater nuclear war has been growing. Before this time, about three-fourths of the initial strikes were to have been made by missiles. The shift reflects not only the growing capabilities of Soviet tactical aircraft but a greater appreciation of the role aircraft can play in accurate delivery of lower yield weapons for battlefield support.

47. There are about 1,200 tactical nuclear missile launchers opposite NATO and they consist chiefly of the FROG and Scud systems. These missiles have ranges of about 70 km and 300 km respectively. The FROG apparently will be replaced or augmented by the SS-21 which has a range of about 120 km and can deliver nuclear, chemical, or conventional warheads, including cluster munitions. A replacement for the Scud, the SS-X-23, has completed development and could be deployed with field units beginning in 1981. It is expected to have improved accuracy, range, and reaction time compared to the Scud. The nuclear artillery assets of the USSR consist of at least seven active artillery brigades and one mobilization unit located in the western USSR. No nuclear-capable artillery brigades have yet been identified outside the USSR []

48. The strategic component of the Pact's theater nuclear forces available for a war against NATO consists chiefly of bombers, medium- and intermediate-range land-based missiles, and submarine-launched missiles. In addition, the Soviets could employ a portion of their intercontinental ballistic missile force against European targets if the situation warranted.

49. The bomber force available for theater nuclear strike missions in Europe and adjacent waters numbers about 700 aircraft. More than 400 of these bombers are Badgers which entered service about 25 years ago and have not been produced since 1959. Similarly, the almost 200 Blinder bombers opposite NATO were introduced in 1962 and went out of production in 1969. Nevertheless, the Soviets have extended the useful life of these aircraft by equipping them with improved missiles and it is evident that they intend to retain them in an operational status throughout the period of this Estimate. The most formidable nuclear weapons delivery system in the Soviet bomber force is the Backfire. First deployed in late 1974, it represents a significant improvement over Badger and Blinder in both combat radius and payload. It also has an advanced electronic countermeasures system to facilitate penetration of modern air defenses. There are now about 100 Backfires available for use against NATO and additional aircraft of this type are still being produced.

50. The medium- and intermediate-range, land-based strategic missiles available for use against NATO consist of over 500 launchers for SS-4, SS-5, and SS-20 missiles. Although a small percentage of the SS-4 and SS-5 launchers may be intended for use against targets in the Middle East or Asia, all are judged capable of attacking targets in NATO. The SS-20 is a considerable advance over these missiles. It carries three, independently targeted reentry vehicles, uses solid propellants, and has better accuracy, reaction time, and refire capabilities than the SS-4 and SS-5. Moreover, it is mobile, thus decreasing its vulnerability to attack. Within the next few years, the SS-20 will become the mainstay of the land-based ballistic missile force for peripheral attack. More than 240 launchers for the SS-20 have been identified, of which about two-thirds are estimated for use against NATO.

51. The ballistic missile submarine force believed to be assigned to West European targets includes 10 boats of the G and H classes, each of which has three launchers. The diesel-powered G-class boats are assigned to the Baltic Fleet and could use their 800-km SS-N-5 missiles to hit targets in West Germany, the Benelux countries, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, France, and Italy. The nuclear-powered, H-class boats are assigned to the Northern Fleet and would require four days' transit from their home ports before they could hit NATO targets other than those in Scandinavia.

52. Over the next decade, the Soviets will continue to improve both their tactical and strategic nuclear forces available for theater warfare in Europe. The tactical ballistic missile systems will grow in both

quality and number. In the early-to-mid-1980s, the Soviets could introduce missiles equipped with terminal homing systems. By the mid-to-late 1980s, long-range cruise missiles could be deployed. Among the other tactical nuclear weapon systems, the Soviets are expected to continue establishing nuclear artillery brigades in the western USSR and some may be introduced in Eastern Europe during the period of this Estimate. The potential for nuclear delivery by tactical aviation is also expected to grow, chiefly by the introduction of more modern aircraft, improved air-to-surface missile systems with low-yield warheads, and the training of more nuclear-delivery pilots.

53. The strategic forces component of the Pact's theater nuclear delivery systems during the 1980s will consist chiefly of SS-20 missiles and Backfire bombers. Some intercontinental ballistic missile complexes and a few G- and H-class ballistic missile submarines may be assigned to European targets past the mid-1980s, but the backbone of the force will be the SS-20. By 1985, we project a total SS-20 force of 450-500 launchers. We estimate that about 270 launchers in the western USSR would oppose NATO with at least 90 launchers in the Urals also capable of reaching targets throughout Western Europe. The bomber force is expected to remain about the same size. Badgers and Blinders probably will be replaced by Backfires and by the end of the decade 400 to 500 of the latter aircraft are expected to be in service; 300 to 360 of these could be deployed opposite NATO.

54. During the period of this Estimate the Soviets may introduce tactical nuclear warheads with lower yields than at present. The improved accuracy of their newer missile systems would permit the Soviets to achieve a comparable probability of damage against targets to which higher yield weapons are now assigned and the resulting radioactive contamination of the surrounding areas would be much lower. Since the Soviets appear concerned about nuclear weapons effects, it is possible that they will undertake development of a reduced residual radiation device before 1990 but we expect that they would have difficulty in weaponizing such a design. We have evidence that the USSR has built enhanced radiation devices, but none that they have begun production or deployment of weapons of this type. These developments notwithstanding, we estimate that for the rest of this decade the bulk of the Pact's nuclear weapons inventory for theater warfare in Europe will continue to consist of the higher yield weapons.

How the Pact Would Go to War

55. The Soviets' experience in World War II, the innate conservatism of the leadership for the USSR, the respect they and other East

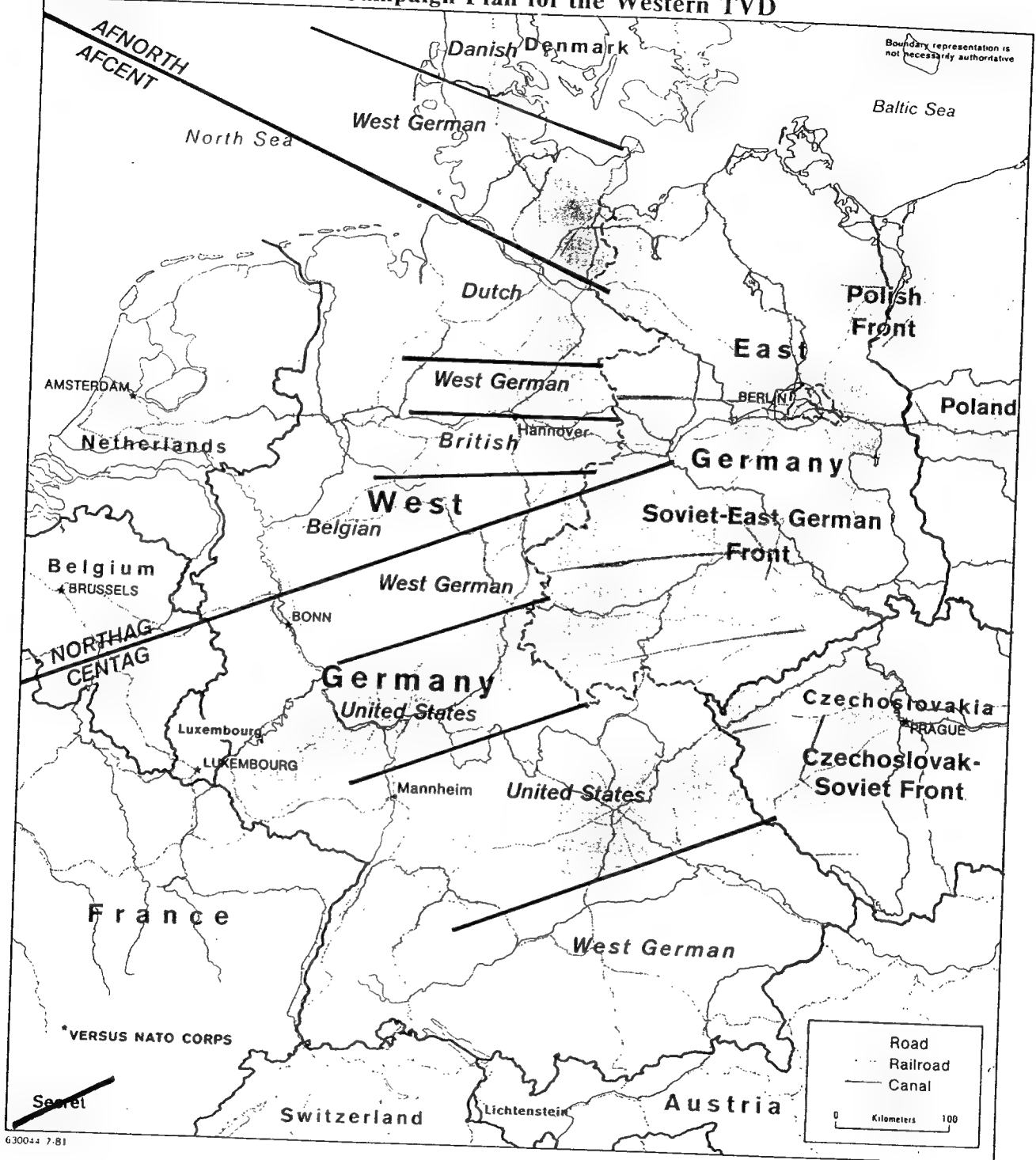
European leaders share for NATO's capabilities, and their conviction that an East-West conflict probably would become nuclear all suggest that the Pact would not undertake a decision to go to war in Europe except under desperate political or military circumstances. Once that decision was taken, however, the Pact could move with high speed and great force to achieve its objectives. We do not have access to the Pact's war plans, but we are confident that we can deduce their general nature, at least for the opening phases of a war with NATO.

56. As previously described, the Soviets appear to have divided the area in which such a conflict would be fought into at least four theaters of military operations (TVDs). (See figure 1). It is obvious that they believe that Central Europe, which is the focus of the Pact's Western TVD, would be the decisive arena. That conviction is made manifest by the priority they accord to this region in the assignment of their military manpower and equipment. It is also evident from their doctrine and writings which, despite some variations, consistently call for an effort to overwhelm NATO in Germany with a massive, combined air assault and ground offensive. This principal effort notwithstanding, the Soviets know that the Pact must also be prepared to fight in the adjacent land and sea areas identified as the Southwestern, Northwestern, and at least one maritime TVD. We have little direct evidence on the Pact's view of these flank operations in relation to the main thrust in Central Europe. We believe, however, that concurrent with the initiation of hostilities in that arena, the Soviets would strike at northern Norway to facilitate the deployment of their Northern Fleet, would attack NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean, and probably would move against the Turkish Straits. Despite this estimate that the Pact would not immediately undertake concurrent, major ground offensives in all theaters, we do believe that secondary offensives or holding operations would be conducted on the flanks to weaken NATO forces in these areas and to keep them from being shifted to Central Europe.

The Initial Campaign in the Western TVD

57. Pact planning for the Western Theater of Military Operations (TVD) envisions offensives along three axes in Central Europe (see figure 2). To carry out these offensives, the Pact probably would seek, at least initially, to organize its forces into three groups—the Soviet-East German front, the Polish front, and the Czechoslovak-Soviet front. These fronts would be made up of varying combinations of Soviet and NSWP forces currently stationed in East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia. If time permitted, they would be reinforced by the

Figure 2
Illustrative Warsaw Pact Campaign Plan for the Western TVD*



630044 7.81

Belorussian and Carpathian fronts drawn from military districts in the western USSR. Although a war between NATO and the Pact could begin in any number of ways, it probably would be preceded by an extended period of rising tension during which both sides would take steps to improve their forces. How long this period would extend is not possible to predict, but if it lasted as long as two weeks, the Pact would have time to prepare the five fronts noted above and move them into Eastern Europe. This would provide a force of 80 to 90 ground divisions plus support and tactical air units. It would also allow enough time for most of the active naval units in the Pact fleets to get ready to put to sea. The launching of a Pact offensive in Central Europe after a shorter period of preparation and with less than five fronts is feasible but not as desirable from a Soviet standpoint.

58. The Soviet-East German front would attack NATO forces in central West Germany probably between Hannover in the north and Mannheim in the south. Major elements of this front also could swing north of Hannover across the north German plain but this would demand extensive restructuring of its logistic base. The Polish front would attempt to defeat NATO forces in northern West Germany with an ultimate objective of seizing Denmark and the Netherlands. The Czechoslovak-Soviet front would attack toward the Rhine in the area roughly between Mannheim and the Swiss-German border. If the two additional reinforcing fronts from the USSR were available, we would expect the Belorussian front to be committed alongside the Soviet-East German front, probably on its southern flank. The Carpathian front probably would be used to reinforce the Czechoslovak-Soviet front.

59. The success of the Pact's apparent planning for a campaign in Central Europe depends to a considerable degree on the performance of the NSWP forces involved in these fronts. Recent events in Poland have provided new reasons to question the potential reliability of these forces and we expect that the Soviets could be planning to shoulder a larger portion of the burden in a Central European offensive, particularly in the northern part of Germany. Poland continues to bear the principal responsibility for prosecuting the northern axis of advance and for facilitating the movement of Soviet reinforcements toward West Germany. We have no evidence that the Soviets have decided to relieve the Poles of these responsibilities, but we believe that alternative plans must have been considered. One option that has been tested in Pact exercises is to bring forces forward from the USSR's Baltic Military District to conduct operations in conjunction with the Polish armed forces.

60. In the Baltic Sea, Pact naval operations would be conducted in the context of the overall campaign in the Western TVD, particularly the ground and air operations of the Polish front. The broad objectives of the Pact's naval campaign in this area would be to gain control of the Baltic Sea and access to the North Sea. If initial sea control and air superiority operations were successful, Pact forces in the Baltic would concentrate on supporting the Polish front's offensive across northern West Germany and into Denmark.

The Initial Campaign in the Southwestern TVD

61. The Southwestern TVD encompasses a broad area reaching from Italy to the Persian Gulf. [] in-
creasing interest in the latter area, particularly in Iran. We believe, however, that the principal focus of the Southwestern TVD is on a war with NATO and, specifically, in conducting operations in conjunction with those in the Western and Northwestern TVDs. First among the Pact's objectives in this campaign would be seizure of the Turkish Straits. The Soviet forces for this operation would be drawn chiefly from the Odessa Military District and most would have to transit Romania and Bulgaria to reach Turkish territory. In Bulgaria, they would be augmented by some Bulgarian forces to form an Odessa front. The front's objectives would be to destroy Turkish forces in eastern Thrace, break through the fortifications protecting the land approaches to the Turkish Straits, and seize the Straits.

62. Probably concurrent with the effort to seize the Straits would be a major ground operation through Austria. The attack would be conducted by a combined Soviet and Hungarian force to be called the Danube front. This front could, however, also be used to protect the southern flank of the Western TVD in West Germany or move south into Italy.

63. To attack Greece, the Pact would form a Balkan front on the western flank of the Odessa front. It would consist of the bulk of the Bulgarian Army and could also include some Romanian forces. Considering the size of the Balkan front, the difficult terrain in Greece, and the questionable commitment of Romanian forces, it seems likely that the front probably would confine its operations to engaging Greek forces in Thrace and securing the western flank of the Odessa front.

64. We have some indications that the Pact could conduct a limited offensive into eastern Turkey. The primary objectives of such an undertaking probably would be to keep Turkish forces in this area

from aiding in the defense of the Straits. The Soviet forces available for this offensive would be drawn from the Transcaucasus Military District and, if required, the North Caucasus Military District. Some portion of this combined force also could be used to move into northwestern Iran and, conceivably, farther south. Since at least mid-1980 the Soviets have been investigating the possibility of large-scale operations into Iran and throughout the Persian Gulf region. Although control of this area would be attractive, the effort to seize it—either as a prelude to or in conjunction with a European war—could tie up considerable second-echelon and strategic reserve forces that otherwise would be available for operations against NATO.

65. The naval operations that would support and extend the Pact's ground offensives in the Southwestern TVD would include efforts to consolidate control of the Black Sea, support the movement of Pact forces along its western littoral, and assist in seizing the Turkish Straits. From the outset of hostilities, Pact air and naval units would attack NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean, and possibly the Arabian Sea, especially carrier battle groups and ballistic missile submarines.

The Initial Campaign in the Northwestern TVD

66. Initial Soviet objectives in this theater would center on ensuring the security of Northern Fleet ballistic missile submarines and guaranteeing access to the North Atlantic for these and other Soviet ships and aircraft, and protecting the Kola Peninsula and the Leningrad region. To achieve these objectives, the Soviets almost certainly would launch a limited ground offensive into northern Norway early in the war. The Soviets probably would be deterred from attempting a larger campaign into central or southern Norway at an early stage of the war by the restriction that terrain places on the employment of forces, the potentially strong NATO resistance beyond Finnmark, and the extended lines of communication from Pact territory.

The Initial Campaign in the North Atlantic

67. Although the Soviets clearly expect naval engagements throughout the North Atlantic, they reckon that the heaviest initial combat would occur in and north of the waters between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom—the G-I-UK gap. Soviet operations in this region would be intended to prevent NATO naval excursions into an ocean area the Soviets consider critical to defense of their homeland and to their Navy's strategic strike mission. The most pressing initial

task in this area would be to protect ballistic missile submarines in transit to and on station in their launch/dispersal areas. Significant portions of the Northern Fleet's submarines and surface forces would be initially committed to this task. [] the Soviets also intend to weaken or defeat NATO's naval forces—particularly carrier and amphibious task groups—either in the southern Norwegian Sea or approaching that area from the United States or the United Kingdom. Their plan is to stage successive and coordinated assaults by submarines, strike aircraft, and surface combatants.

68. The extent of operations in the broader reaches of the North Atlantic would depend, in large part, on the outcome of initial engagements, or Soviet perceptions of the threat, in the Norwegian, Barents, and Greenland Seas. The most critical Soviet task in the Atlantic would be the destruction of Western SSBNs before SLBM launch. Given their limited open-ocean detection capabilities, however, the Soviets probably will concentrate their anti-SSBN efforts on choke points and the approaches to Western SSBN bases. The Soviets also plan to conduct some attacks against shipping engaged in the resupply and reinforcement of NATO Europe early in a war.

Conclusions

69. We believe that during the period of this Estimate the Soviet Union's commitment to improving its theater military forces will not flag despite changes in the political leadership and problems in the economy. The USSR has too much riding on the readiness of its general purpose forces to permit this to occur and, from Moscow's standpoint, nowhere are the stakes higher than in its forces opposite NATO. During the past 15 years, the Soviets made major strides in increasing the size and capabilities of the Pact forces in this region. During the 1980s further improvements will be made but they will have more to do with quality than quantity. This is not to say that some growth in numbers will not occur. For example, the number of Soviet ground divisions is likely to remain fairly stable but the number of men assigned to those divisions will rise. The emphasis, however, will be on qualitative improvement to be achieved through the introduction of more advanced weapon systems and the organization of forces into elements more responsive to command and the requirements of modern warfare.

70. In effecting these improvements, the Soviets will continue to face a series of seemingly intractable problems. Some are technological. For example, how to overcome their serious deficiencies in anti-submarine warfare; how to stay up with the always changing

armor/antiarmor equation; and how to cope with the West's emerging capability for theater nuclear war with long-range cruise missiles. Other problems have more to do with manpower: how to deal with a declining birth rate and a growing proportion of non-Slavs in the armed forces; how to train conscripts to operate increasingly complex weapon systems; and how to conduct multinational combat operations with linguistic differences in the Pact forces at least as marked as those within NATO. Potentially the most threatening problems for the USSR, however, are political. The question of the reliability of the non-Soviet Warsaw Pact countries in a war with the West has always been present; recent events in Poland have made it even more pressing. Over the past 15 years, the Soviets have developed a strategy that has increased their dependency on their East European partners not only for logistic support but for sharing the brunt of offensive action in important sectors of a NATO-Pact conflict. The validity of this strategy has been made doubtful as a result of the current situation in Poland and whether the course of political liberalization in that country continues or Moscow finally intervenes to suppress it, the outlook for the reliability of its East European cohorts cannot be comforting to the leadership of the Soviet Union.

71. These problems notwithstanding, the Warsaw Pact forces opposite NATO seem certain to continue to evolve in ways that will heighten the threat to the West. During the period of this Estimate, the changes in their capabilities will result substantially from initiatives that traditionally have not been characteristic of the Soviet military establishment. The strength of the USSR's theater forces historically has rested on simplicity in equipment and operational doctrine made practical by the application of large numbers of men and machines. In the coming decade, these fundamental strengths will remain, but overlaying them will be an increasing commitment to more sophisticated weaponry and more flexible approaches to command and control. In essence, the Soviets will be pressing to acquire the capabilities that the West has considered its special province and the equalizing factor for the Pact's numerical advantage in men and equipment. In large measure, the threat posed by the Pact's forces opposite NATO will grow to the degree that the Soviets succeed in this effort.

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